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REPORT

By Member of the Dissertation Committee on the

Dissertation of

SHUR Elizaveta Alexandrovna on the theme:

“US Public Diplomacy in India, 2001-2016,”

Submitted in conformity with the requirements for the

candidate degree in Historical Sciences

Specialisation 5.6.7 – History of International

Relations and Foreign Policy

Having read the doctoral dissertation of Elizaveta Shur in the English-language version, I am ready to offer a series of observations and draw conclusions concerning the academic quality of the work. The thesis concerns the development and evolution of the Public Diplomacy (PD) efforts by the United States in India from 2001-2016 from a practical and a theoretical perspective. Shur articulates the focus as seeking to understand the evolving and transforming (technological, political, societal and institutional) trends and processes underway in the conceptualisation, practice and results of American PD in the period studied. It employs and blends different academic disciplines, such as politics, international relations and communication studies. This thesis analyses and evaluates a vast set of academic, official documents and popular science literature on the topics. In addition, Shur produced a number of good publications and was active in the wider academic community.

The thesis explores a very new and relatively underexplored case study, and in this regard it is a highly unique study of the contemporary understanding and implementation of PD within the context of an evolving global order. This is well justified on



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pages 205, 209-210. When examining the logic and effect of the appearance of content within the framework of four chapters, an introduction and a conclusion, the material appears in a logical manner and the information exhibits a clear and easy to digest flow. Furthermore, the actual topic, method and approach are all very well described and justified in the very beginning of the thesis. The thesis displays a balanced and well-considered approach to realising the aims and goals that are stated.

An appropriate conceptual and theoretical toolkit has been selected in order to address the stated aims and goals of the thesis, which appear on pages 206-207, and 209-212. However, these tools were not always and consistently applied in interpreting and analysing the vast amounts of empirical data. Some of the chapters had a greater level of integration of concepts and theories and others were more lacking. It would have been very beneficial for the analysis and evaluation of the data if the candidate had, at the end of each chapter, introduced a concise summary of that chapter's conceptual and theoretical significance in the wider academic field, and therefore the contribution of this work to the current state of knowledge on the academic discipline and topic. Does it build on existing knowledge, create new knowledge or challenge existing knowledge?

One of the possible contributions of the thesis, which could/Should have been explored in terms of the theoretical and/or conceptual contribution of this thesis to the state-of-the-art knowledge is on the possible and potential identifications of constraints and restraints on the effectiveness of PD programmes. This is made even more relevant by the nature of the case study, which suggests that the environmental conditions were seemingly conducive to the successful influence and effect



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by the communicator (the United States). It is noted, especially in the conclusion, a conflation between *measure of activity* and *measure of effect*. The first sentence of the conclusion notes the “effective” US use of communication on India. But, in what way successful in terms of the effect rather than the activity? It is argued that by the candidate that some of the strategic objectives of the US have failed, and that the high illiteracy rate in rural India is an obstacle to the US in influencing and manipulating the mass Indian public for US foreign policy objectives, which is certainly not in India’s national interest.

At times there seems to be a lack of critical thinking on the data being presented in the thesis, especially when this is government generated information. In the beginning of the thesis there is less critical thinking displayed than the later parts of the thesis. This has the cognitive effect of creating dissonance for the reader, and a lack of consistency in logic and argumentation. For example, the rhetorical goals of US PD aims and goals in India are initially presented uncritically and without interpretation. This is addressed more effectively at the end when it is becoming clearer that the US does not prefer symmetrical partnerships with countries, but rather asymmetric relations at the level of vassal and tributary states. In other words, other countries serve as US objects and not sovereign subjects. India has its interests that are not necessarily the same as the US, but the US wants India to aggravate the situation for its benefit and India’s detriment owing to the transforming global order. I would also question, what is “anti-American misinformation” (page 329)? Is this relating to people reacting to the dangerous and destructive effects on the lives of these people by US foreign and security policy? If so, this would be a very rational and understandable position. A very minor point, the name of one of the quoted authors is E.N. Pashentsev and



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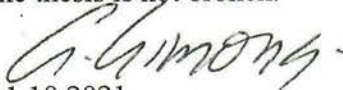
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not E. I. Pashencev. A final minor point, “related to the use of nuclear weapons exclusively for peaceful purposes” (page 245), by their very design and intended use these weapons are anything but peaceful. There is an urgent need to distinguish critically between stated word and physical deed.

In summary, the thesis covers a relatively understudied and undertheorized, but also in correcting misperceptions and assumptions subject within the wider field of public diplomacy and international relations studies. The strengths of the work far outweigh the weaknesses of it. This work contributes to a deeper theoretical and empirical understanding of the nature of contemporary cultural, (geo)political and technological aspects and effects in contemporary PD, and its theoretical and practical evolution.

The dissertation meets the basic requirements established by Order No. 6821/1 of 1 September 2016, “On the Procedure for Awarding Academic Degrees at Saint Petersburg State University,” the candidate Elizaveta Shur deserves the award of the scientific degree of Candidate of Historical Sciences in the speciality 5.6.7. – History of International Relations and Foreign Policy. Clause 11 of the aforementioned Order by the author of the thesis is not broken.


11.10.2021

Member of the Dissertation Council

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Institute for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Uppsala University, Sweden, Associate Professor Greg Simons



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